DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 246 418 CS 208 345

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TITLE The Use of Basic Writing Materials in ESL Writing Classes.
PUB DATE Mar 84
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (35th, New York, NY, March 29-31, 1984).
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *English (Second Language); Higher Education; *Instructional Materials; *Prewriting; *Resource Materials; Second Language Instruction; Student Needs; Teaching Methods; Textbooks; *Writing Instruction
IDENTIFIERS *Basic Writing; *Research Papers (Students)

ABSTRACT

Similarities between the weaknesses found among English as a first language students and English as a second language (ESL) students suggest the need to use basic writing materials with English as a second language students. Prewriting materials should be chosen in an effort to teach students some criteria for analyzing, evaluating, and criticizing written work and, ultimately, their own written work. Guided writing texts should be chosen on the basis of their cultural awareness and sensitivity and the extent to which they address the English language needs of the students who will use them. Finally, guidebooks on research paper writing should present detailed explanations about what to write in a research paper, with a heavy dose of what a thesis statement is, what it means to adequately develop a thesis statement, how library sources are used to develop a thesis, and why documentation of those sources is so important. (Appended is a short bibliography of materials for use with ESL students.) (HOD)

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ED246418

The Use Of Basic Writing Materials In ESL Writing Classes

Presented at The Conference On

College Composition And Communication

New York City, March 1984

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Since 1975 when Newsweek published "Why Johnny Can't Write," concern has grown about writing in the American education system, especially among users of non-standard dialects at the college level. In fact, since that time, there has been real worry about the writing skill of native English speakers who are college graduates. So there is reason to think that the writing skill is not considered to be well-developed among many university students in the U.S. -- native or non-native speakers of English.

Subsequent work in basic writing has pointed to the fact that both groups of students do not view writing as a process but as a product. Other similarities between the weaknesses found among English as a first language users and ESL students warrant the use of what have been labelled "basic writing" materials by English as a second language learners. One area in which this "cross-over" is particularly apparent is in the relatively well-established practice of providing for writing instruction for native users of English which is designed to develop students' ability to write for a particular academic discipline. This methodology has been called in various universities across the country, "Writing Across The Curriculum" or "Writing In The Disciplines." In ESL, the English for Special Purposes approach has been shown to be an effective teaching approach - particularly among highly motivated adult learners - in preparing for a profession or career. This "ESP" approach has gained particular strength in Europe where large numbers of north Africans, East Europeans and continental Europeans go to England in order to receive a relatively short program of instruction in which they will learn English for use in a particular professional or

career-oriented setting. These ESP courses are beginning to gain credibility in settings such as those mentioned because the English which these adult learners require is confined to a particular subject area; these learners are not required to know what has come to be termed, "general" or "global" English, but rather, English for application in a specified function.

In short, there is evidence that learning to write in English is certainly not the same experience for native speakers as it is for ESL students. But there is some evidence to support that both groups of learners share some of the same kinds of problems. In addition, there is reason to think that basic writing and ESL may have something to learn from one another.

As more students with less and less clear-cut labels (are they second dialect speakers, but ESL writers; are they ESL speakers who come from countries in which English is the language of instruction in the schools they have attended; are they native English writers who have been raised in bilingual homes) come into university English and ESL classes, the lines dividing basic writing methodology and materials use and those materials and methods which have traditionally been associated with second language learning become more and more difficult to draw and less and less useful to the language practitioner. The cross-over or link between basic writing for native users of English and for ESL students <u>is</u> going on now and in some areas of the country, has been going on for some time.

The purpose of this paper is to present some guidelines for the use of materials designed for basic writing by ESL students. It is noted

that at the same time that I wish to point out some practical suggestions for materials choice and use, I would not wish to build a case for dividing or combining students into classes geared toward a particular language background. This burden of placing students in ESL or basic writing or remedial writing classes is an administrative one of which we as teachers are fortunate to be free. My point is that in situations where ESL students are in ESL classes or where they are working alongside their American under-graduate counterparts, the suggestions to be made will be useful.

The common thread which is new neither to basic writing nor to ESL teaching, but which must be kept in mind, is the necessity of meeting the needs of individual students. Therefore, the following suggestions are made with the assumption that in applying any method of teaching and in choosing any materials for the classrooom, teachers will bear in mind the need of both assessing the needs of their students and attempting to meet those needs.

The suggestions to be made are for the choosing of materials for three areas of teaching the writing skill: pre-writing, guided writing and research paper writing.

Pre-writing is the early phase of developing the writing skill in which the goal is typically to provide learners with opportunities to analyze the written work which has been done by others. In this early phase, writing instruction centers around reading of model paragraphs and essays written by others (both well-known writers and members of the class as well). The end result is not written material but class discussion. In these discussions, learners attend to characteristics of

written work such as register, audience, cohesion (the forming of sentences into grammatical units),coherence (the forming of sentences into "sense units" and a meaningful flow of ideas), writer's intent, and aspects of organizational patterns.

Though pre-writing is typically a phase of the writing curriculum which does not have as its primary goal the production of written material, many teachers find that students enrolled in a writing course (even in a beginning level writing course) want to write. Informal writing exercises and experiences can be particularly motivating at this stage and may take the form of journals or letters exchanged by members of the class. These samples of student writing are not corrected for grammatical accuracy, but function to give the learner the confidence that he/she can write something that is meaningful and at the same time, something that someone else, to some extent, will understand.

The most important consideration for choosing materials for the next stage of writing instruction - guided writing - is the need for communicative writing practice. Communicative writing practice in this setting means the successful expression of a writer's intent within given contexts. This does not mean teaching (creative) writing in place of expository or argumentative modes of written expression familiar to the academic setting. What must be avoided are the old axioms - We set up a situation in which we provide the student with something to say. We let the student say it. Then, we examine what the student said in relation to what he/she should have said. insert

We cannot ask students to do an excercise such as writing a letter in English to his/her mother when we know well that that student would

not write to his/her mother English because the student (and the mother) don't write letters to each other in English.

The necessity of keeping in mind what purposes students of English are using English <u>for</u> is important to keep in mind. We should be addressing the rhetorical styles and writing skills that students need.

There is now broad theoretical and empirical support of the notion that <u>logic</u> is a culturally-defined concept. Student text books which reflect this research finding are few. But as we conduct classes of multi-ethnic students, it is helpful to keep in mind that the development of a coherent, tight argument or even a thesis statement in an American college or university classroom may mean something quite different for students who have been educated in other cultures. The notion of "supporting a thesis statement" through the use of library sources is in many cases a new concept to students. Reminding students that a thesis statement may be the <u>only</u> idea of his/her own in a research paper may help to head off the all too common problem we have all experienced with students who have perhaps unintentionally under-documu mented his/her sources, or plagiarized the work of another. Annotating, footnoting and documentation of sources is generally not addressed in te terms of its importance and consequences until <u>after</u> the fact when it's too late to do much other than to communicate to a student the "I told you so" message. An awareness that some students seem to engage in such misconduct because they are not fully aware of what is mean by full development of a thesis or argument based on support from <u>annotated, documented</u> sources could head off some of these problems.

Turning now to the issue of mechanics in writing, a problem which plagues teachers not only as they make assignments but as they assign grades. It is helpful for students to know that typing a paper can improve their grades - not only in their English classes but in any course they take. A paper which is typed of course will impress any instructor as he/she looks through the "stack of papers" to be corrected. A typed paper suggests to the reader (whether that reader is a teacher or anyone else) that the paper is presented as "a final version." Typing suggests that the paper has been proofread, that it has been re-read for spelling and grammar mistakes that the student corrected before handing the paper in. In addition, typed words are simply easier to read than the hand- written word. Instructors faced with their never-endingstack of papers" to be corrected will be most positively influenced by the appearance in that stack of papers of one student who has taken the trouble of typing his/her work. Though students typically balk at the idea of typing papers for English writing class, the "strokes" received from a busy instructor after the first round of homework is returned in one of their other courses inspires a certain motivation to type the written work assigned in all their courses. Typed papers tend to pay off particularly well for students with weak English writing skills.

Finally, the use of research paper guidebooks will be addressed. In ESL writing courses, research paper guidebooks which are designed for native English speakers are often used because few texts on this subject are available which are designed for ESL students. though recently at least one has been published ( ). In fact, guidebooks for native

speakers are often quite helpful to ESL students. Typically, the subject of research paper writing is often covered in writing skills texts - often in the final chapter - but to a relatively limited extent. Native speakers' basic writing texts are however often helpful to foreign students because these books tend to be more detailed and tend to be more deductive in that they present what it is you have to do, while ESL materials tend to present a "step-by-step how to write a research paper" approach. This approach often leaves students wondering...."Ok - I've done these exercises. Now what do I write in this research paper?"

In summary, there are three areas in the teaching of writing which the cross-over between basic writing materials and ESL writing materials may be of help to teachers with students with a variety of writing needs. The names of some texts which may assist teachers are listed on the hand-out which is attached. Pre-writing materials should be chosen in an effort to teach students some criteria for analyzing, evaluating and criticizing written work - ultimately, their own written work. Guided writing texts should be chosen on the basis of a) cultural awareness and sensitivity and b) the extent to which they address the English language needs of the students who will use them. Research paper writing guidebooks should be used that present detailed explanations about what to write in a research paper with a heavy dose of what a thesis statement is, what it means to adequately develop a thesis statement, how library sources are used to develop a thesis and why documentation of those sources is so important.

CCCC March 29-31, 1984

The Link: ESL Composition And
Basic Writing

The Use of Native Speaker Materials
In ESL Writing Classes

Lizabeth England

A Short Bibliography Of Some Materials

For Use With ESL Students

(Texts commonly used for native English users but which may also be of help to some ESL students are included. Those texts which are for ESL students in particular are also included and are so designated with an asterisk.)

I. Materials for Pre-writing skills development

(the goal is to emphasize some of the processes involved in writing)

Flower, L.: Problem Solving Strategies For Writing. Harcourt, Brace and Javonovich, New York, 1981.

(Emphasis here is on expository writing in academic settings with an orientation toward clarity in explaining a problem and solving it.)

Kunz, L.A. and Viscount, R.R.: Write Me A Ream. A Course In Controlled Composition. Teachers' College Press, Columbia University, New York, 1976.

(Though designed for job training and adult education programs, this short book is a collection of exercises for the beginning student who needs work on developing abilities to use and manipulate grammatical structures commonly found in expository or academic writing such as passives, relative clauses, and adjective and noun clauses.)

*Lawrence, M.S.: Writing As A Thinking Process. Ann Arbor Press, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1972.

II. Materials for Writing Skills Development

(Emphasis on creating a piece of written work.)

*Adams, J.A. and Dwyer, M.A.: English For Academic Uses. A Writing Workbook. Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.

(The suthors wish to address writing as discourse rather than as manipulation of grammatical structures. With this orientation, the book tries to bridge the gap between knowledge of language rules and ability to use language. This approach is often helpful to the intermediate level student who knows the rules of English grammar but hasn't had opportunities (or has not developed the skills needed to use those rules).

Several ESL texts are available which are for English for academic purposes (or EAP) use. These texts are part of a somewhat new direction in the field toward English for Special Purposes (ESP).

*Arnaudet, M.L. and Barrett, M.E.: Paragraph Development. A Guide For Students Of English As A Second Language. Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1981.

Bell, J.K. and Cohn, A.A.: Rhetoric 3. Glencoe Publishing Co., Inc., Encino, California, 1976.

(By providing a transition between paragraph and essay, the approach of this book is to present models and writing assignments to help students develop an expository writing skill.)

Johnson, K.: Communicate In Writing. A Functional Approach To Writing Through Reading Comprehension. Longman, 1981.

(Use of this text (one of the few which adapts principles of communicative language teaching solely to the writing skill) may require oral discussion work in groups during class time. However, the focus is on the development of the writing skill through reading practice. Students who need English for use in academic settings may benefit more from this text than others.

Kirszner, L.G. and Mandell, S.R.: Writing: A College Rhetoric. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1984.

(This basic writing textbook assumes that students have mastered skills in its presentation of exercises to develop expository writing skills at the essay level. With an emphasis on the essay "thesis-and-support," and "arguing a point" are viewed as the type of writing required of college-level basic writers.

Rossi, L.D. and Gasser, M.: Academic English. Prentice-Hall, 1983.

(English as it is used in universities and colleges is emphasized in this text. An attempt is made to present lessons from a variety of academic fields of study and to incorporate the grammatical and vocabulary common in those fields. The underlying idea seems to be that through practice with English as it used in academics, students will be better prepared to succeed in academic courses.

*Smalley, R.L. and Hank, M.R.: Refining Composition Skills. Rhetoric And Grammar for ESL Students. MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc., New York, 1982.

(Though emphasis is on development of students' ability to use the various expository writing patterns of example, comparison/contrast, classification, process, cause and effect and argument, review of grammatical structures is also presented as they relate to these patterns in academic settings.)

III. Materials for Research Paper Writing Skills Development

Bailey, E.P. Jr., Powell, P.A., Shuttleworth, J.M.: The Practical Writer. Paragraph To Theme. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, New York, 1979.

(Through a detailed description of both the purposes involved in writing a research paper, as well as the step-by-step processes involved in producing one, this book integrates a presentation of the research paper with some of the fundamental skills of expository writing.)

Coyle, W.: Research Papers. 5th Edition. Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, Indianapolis, 1980.

(This text outlines the steps of writing a research paper. In addition, exercises are presented which can help students practice their skill in limiting a topic for a research paper, taking notes from library sources, outlining and footnoting. The final section presents a sample research paper which students can use as a model for their own papers.)

Fowler, H.R.: The Little, Brown Handbook. Little, Brown and Co., Boston, Massachusetts, 1983.

(Though brief, the treatment of research paper writing in Fowler, Using the Library, Documentation and Research Paper (especially the discussion of plagiarism), provides some students with a helpful guide to some of the steps in writing a research paper.)

*Heineman, A.: Writing Term Papers. 2nd Edition. Harcourt, Brace, Javanovich, Inc., New York, 1983.

(This text is one of the few research paper guides designed specifically for ESL students.)

Lester, J.D.: Writing Research Papers. A Complete Guide. 3rd Edition. Scott, Foresman and Co., Glenview, Illinois, 1980.

(This guide is useful to many ESL students because it contains examples of all preliminary forms in research paper writing, including notes, outlines, rough drafts and teacher-corrected rough drafts and final drafts.)

IV. Some Materials Which Address Both Theoretical And Practical Issues In Writing.

Johnson, K.: "The 'four skills' in communicative language teaching: Writing." In Johnson, K. and Morrow, K.: Communication In The Classroom. Longman, 1981.

Kaplan, R.: Cultural thought patterns in inter-cultural education. Language Learning 16: 1-20, 1966.

The TESOL Newsletter, February, 1984. Supplements: Writing and Composition. Ed., Ann Raimes. A collection of practical suggestions by teachers. Topics include Showing Writing: Modeling the Process; An ESL Writing Workshop; Connecting Ideas In ESL Writing; Peer Editing and Writing Success; and others.

Zamel, V.: Teaching composition in the ESL classroom: What we can learn from research in the teaching of English. TESOL Quarterly 10: 67-76, 1976.